**YESHIVAT HAR ETZION**

**ISRAEL KOSCHITZKY VIRTUAL BEIT MIDRASH (VBM)**

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**THE LAWS OF THE BERAKHOT**

**Rav David Brofsky**

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This week’s shiurim are dedicated in loving memory   
of Yehuda Nattan Yudkowsky *z”l* whose yahrzeit is 17 Cheshvan

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**Shiur #63: *Birkat Ha-Mazon* (3) –   
The Manner of Reciting the *Birkat Ha-Mazon***

**Introduction**

This week, we will conclude our discussion of *Birkat Ha-Mazon*, as we study the laws relating to the manner in which the *Birkat Ha-Mazon* should be recited. We will first discuss whether and when one may interrupt while saying *Birkat Ha-Mazon*. We will then discuss how *Birkat Ha-Mazon* should be said with the proper intention, while sitting, in the place in which one ate, and whether one who left and forgot to say *Birkat Ha-Mazon* must return in order to say the blessings.

**Interruptions During *Birkat Ha-Mazon***

May one interrupt while saying *Birkat Ha-Mazon* in order to greet or respond to a person, or in order to answer *amen*? This may depend upon a larger question: how are we to understand the relationship between the four blessings of *Birkat Ha-Mazon* and the unit which they compose?

On the one hand, one might compare them to the *Birkot Keriat Shema*, which appear to be a group of loosely connected blessings that are joined together surrounding the *keriat Shema*. Since they do not make up one organic unit, under certain circumstances, one may interrupt in between, and even during, the blessings. For example, the Shulchan Arukh (66:1; see *Berakhot* 14a) rules that in between paragraphs, one may "inquire out of respect" of an "*adam* *nikhbad*" (the Mishna Berura 66:3 explains that this refers to the elderly, wise, or a wealthy person deserving of respect) and respond to anyone, and in the middle of a paragraph, one may inquire "out of fear" for a parent or teacher, as well as for a person of great wisdom, a king, or a thief, and respond to an "*adam nikhbad*". Furthermore, the Shulchan Arukh (66:3) rules that one may respond to *Kaddish*, *Kedusha* ("*kadosh* etc.," "*barukh* etc.,” but not "*yimlokh*,"), *Barkhu*, and the beginning of *Modim* ("*Modim* *anachnu* *lakh*"), even in the middle of a verse. The Rema adds that one may even answer "*amen*" to *Ha-Kel Ha-kadosh* (but not to the rest of *Kaddish* or to other *berakhot*) during *Birkot* *Keriat* *Shema*, and the Mishna Berura (66:23) concludes that in between the blessings one may answer "*amen*" after any *berakha*.

On the other hand, we might compare *Birkat Ha-Mazon* to *Tefilla*, the *Shemoneh Esrei*. One is not permitted to interrupt while saying the *Shemoneh* *Esrei*. The Shulchan Arukh (108:1, 5-6) discusses whether *be-di’avad*, after the fact, an interruption invalidates the prayer.

What is the status of *Birkat Ha-Mazon*? R. Aharon ben R. Ya’akov Ha-Kohen (14th century, France), in his Orchot Chaim (*Birkat Ha-Mazon* 53), rules that *Birkat Ha-Mazon* is similar to *Tefilla*: “Just as one must pray in one place and while standing, so too *Birkat Ha-Mazon* must be said while sitting, unlike *keriat Shema* which one may say while walking.” The Shulchan Arukh (183:8) cites this ruling as well and writes that regarding inquiring during *Birkat Ha-Mazon*, “some say it is similar to *Tefilla*”.

While some authorities question this ruling (Arukh Ha-Shulchan 183:8), others fundamentally accept the position of the Orchot Chaim, but debate whether one should also refrain from answering *amen* or to *Kaddish* and *Kedusha* during *Birkat Ha-Mazon*. The Chazon Ish (28:3) suggests that while inquiring regarding the welfare of others during *Birkat Ha-Mazon* may be prohibited, answering *amen* should be permitted between blessings, and answering to *Kaddish*, *Kedusha*, and “*Ha-Kel Ha-Kadosh*” should be permitted even during the *berakhot*. R. Ovadia Yosef (Yabi’a Omer OC 1:11) discusses this topic in great depth.

**Intention**

One should say *Birkat Ha-Mazon* with the proper *kavanna* (intention). Some suggest that one should say the blessings while reading them from a *siddur* (Mishna Berura 185:1). As noted above, some draw a comparison between the *Shemoneh Esreh* and *Birkat Ha-Mazon*. Therefore, while one should certainly be properly dressed, and some even insist that one should wear a hat and not merely a yarmulke, while saying *Birkat Ha-Mazon* (Magen Avraham 183:5, cited by Mishna Berura 183:11; see also *Berakhot* 51a). One should say the *Birkat Ha-Mazon* while sitting (*Berakhot* 51b).

**Saying *Birkat Ha-Mazon* Where One Ate**

In previous *shiurim*, we discussed the *halakha* of “*shinui makom*”. We noted that the Talmud (*Pesachim* 101b) cites a debate between R. Chisda and R. Sheshet regarding when changing one’s location (*shinui makom*) requires one to say another blessing. R. Sheshet maintains that whenever a person changes location, he must repeat the blessing before eating again, while R. Chisda maintains that it depends on the food in question. When one eats a food that requires that the *berakha acharona* be recited in the place where the food was eaten, leaving the place is not necessarily considered to be a form of ending the meal, and therefore a new blessing is not required if he continues eating. As the Talmud (*Pesachim* 101b) explains, “He [mentally] returns to the first appointed place.” However, if one eats a food that does not require that the *berakha acharona* be recited in the place in which he ate, once he leaves, his meal is considered to be over and a new blessing must be recited if he eats again.

The *Rishonim* disagree as to which foods require one to say the *berakha acharona* in the place in which one ate. The Hagahot Maimoniot (*Hilkhot Berakhot* 4:1) writes that this refers only to bread. Other *Rishonim* (Tosafot, Rosh, and Rif cited above) explain that this refers to bread and other foods made from grains. The Rashbam (see Tosafot) and Rambam (*Hilkhot Berkahot* 4:1), however, claim that this refers to all of the seven species, including the fruits.

The Shulchan Arukh (178:5) cites two opinions regarding whether one must say the *berakha acharona* over all of the seven species or only over foods made from grains in the place in which he ate. The Rema cites the *Hagahot Maimoniot*, who maintains that this only applies to bread. The Magen Avraham (178:12) and the Mishna Berura (178:36) rule that one should preferably say the blessing over all of the seven species, as well as over grain products and bread, in the place in which he ate. The Magen Avraham writes that accordingly, one should not apply the law of *shinui makom* after eating the seven species. Therefore, practically speaking, one only says another blessing after eating a food upon which one says *borei nefashot*.

***Be-Di’avad –* If One Left Without Saying the Final Blessing**

The *mishna* (*Berakhot* 51b) teaches:

One who ate and forgot and did not bless: Beit Shammai says he should return to his place and bless. Beit Hillel says he should bless in the place where he remembered.

This debate relates to the foods for which one must say the blessing in the place in which he ate. Beit Shammai and Beit Hillel debate whether this rule reflects the preferred behavior (*le-khatchila*) or whether even after the fact (*be’di’avad*), if a person left his place, he must return to the place and say the blessing.

The Talmud (ibid. 53b) further explains: “R. Zevid, or as some say R. Dimi b. Abba, said: Opinions differ only in the case where one forgot, but if he intentionally omitted, he must return to his place and say grace.”

Interestingly, despite the Talmud’s general inclination towards the view of Beit Hillel, the *gemara* continues:

It has been taught: Beit Hillel said to Beit Shammai: According to you, if one ate at the top of the Temple Mount and forgot and descended without having said grace, he should return to the top of the Temple Mount and say grace? Beit Shammai replied to Beit Hillel: According to you, if one forgot a purse at the top of the Temple Mount, is he not to go up and get it? And if he will ascend for his own sake, surely he should do so all the more for the honor of Heaven!

There were once two disciples who omitted to say grace. One who did it accidentally followed the rule of Beit Shammai and found a purse of gold, while the other who did it purposely followed the rule of Beit Hillel, and he was eaten by a lion. Rabbah b. Bar Chanah was once travelling with a caravan, and he took a meal and forgot to say grace. He said to himself: What shall I do? If I say to the others, I have forgotten to say grace, they will say to me, Say it [here]; wherever you say the benediction you are saying it to the All-Merciful. I had better tell them that I have forgotten a golden dove. So he said to them: Wait for me, because I have forgotten a golden dove. He went back and said grace and found a golden dove. Why should it have been just a dove? Because the community of Israel are compared to a dove, as it is written, “The wings of the dove are covered with silver, and her pinions with the shimmer of gold.” Just as the dove is saved only by her wings, so Israel are saved only by the precepts.”

This passage led R. Amram Gaon, as cited by the Rosh (Berakhot 4:5) to rule in accordance with Beit Shammai. The Tur rules this way as well. The Rif (*Berakhot* 40a) and Rambam (*Hilkhot Berakhot* 4:1), however, rule in accordance with Beit Hillel that one who forgets to say *Birkat Ha-Mazon* and leaves does not need to return in order to recite the blessing.

The Shulchan Arukh (184:1) rules that a person who ate bread and left before saying *Birkat Ha-Mazon* may say the blessing wherever he is. If, however, he left without saying *Birkat Ha-Mazon* intentionally (i.e. *be-meizid*), then he must return to the place to say *Birkat Ha-Mazon*, unless he fears that too much time will pass and he will no longer be allowed to say *Birkat Ha-Mazon* by the time he returns (Mishna Berura 3). The Shulchan Arukh (184:2) adds that some apply this principle to all of the seven species, and some apply this rule only to grain products. The Arukh Ha-Shulchan (184:3) rules that if one left before saying the final blessing over the other seven species besides bread, one may say the blessing wherever he is.